

**INDIANA FIRST JUDICIAL DISTRICT
PRO BONO COMMITTEE, INC.**

651 E. Third Street, P.O. Box 427
Hobart, Indiana 46342
probono@hobartlaw.net

Phone: (219) 945-1799
Toll Free: (866) 945-1799
Fax: (219) 945-0995

Judith H. Stanton, Esq.
Plan Administrator

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

**ATTORNEY R. CORDELL FUNK NAMED  
OUTSTANDING FIRST DISTRICT PRO BONO ATTORNEY**

At their third annual honors night which began at Bennigans and ended up at the baseball stadium of the Gary SouthShore Railcats, Northwest Indiana judges and lawyers, honored the 196 attorneys who volunteered in the past year to provide free legal services valued at more than \$390,000 to 217 individuals, families and children who cannot otherwise afford legal representation in the seven county First Judicial District. The Committee also received a \$5000.00 donation from the Legacy Foundation, Lake County's community foundation.

Court of Appeals Judge Nancy Vaidik not only participated in the award ceremonies but also entertained the stadium crowd throwing out the ceremonial first pitch and leading the singing of "Take Me Out to the Ballgame" during the 7<sup>th</sup> inning stretch.

Three local banks which are leaders in the interest rates paid on lawyers' trust accounts (IOLTA) which fund the 14 judicial district pro bono committees also were recognized by Indiana Bar Foundation Executive Director Charles Dunlap: Bank Calumet, Mercantile Bank, and Peoples Bank.

The First District Pro Bono Committee named Attorney R. Cordell Funk of Hammond recipient of the prestigious Komyatte "Access to Justice" Award for 2005. This award, named for long-standing legal and community volunteer Attorney Richard P. Komyatte, is awarded for outstanding contributions to the goal of access to justice for all.

Komyatte described Funk's contributions not only as a volunteer attorney known for regularly assuming and diligently pursuing complicated family law cases and also for his efforts to develop both pro se (without attorney) and sliding scale fee projects as

chair of the Lake County Bar Association Family Law Section, and for his ongoing support of pro bono efforts as president-elect of the Lake County Bar Association.

Judge Vaidik told the assembled attorneys how much the Indiana bench cherishes their contributions to the representation of clients who might otherwise appear pro se...or not at all...to pursue their critical legal issues. Clyde Compton, Merrillville, current president of the Indiana State Bar Association, concluded the ceremonies by citing the essential part which pro bono services play in the legal profession and commending the First District attorneys for the more than \$390,000 of pro bono services donated just during 2004 and the over 1300 folks who have been served since the creation of the IOLTA funded judicial district committee in 2001.

Eight attorneys who have contributed at least 50 pro bono hours in the past year were also honored: Richard Busse, Porter County, 50 hours; Earl Walton, Jasper County, 54 hours; Laura Bottando, 63 hours, Julie Glade, 71 hours, Karen Szumlanski 73 hours, Teresa Hollandsworth, 76 hours, J. Douglas Angel,, 135 hours, Cheryl Kuechenberg 287 hours, all of Lake County.

For Angel, Kuechenberg and Walton this was their second year of over 50 pro bono hours. Kuechenberg,, who was recently appointed a Magistrate for Lake Circuit Court, was given a special, "SuperStar" statuette for her extraordinary amount of donated hours, many of which were as guardian ad litem or mediator in family court cases, which she indicated will occupy a prominent position on her desk to encourage attorneys who come to her court to follow in her footsteps as pro bono volunteers.

Another 40 attorneys cited for contributing between 10 and 50 hours: Lake County attorneys Scott Bilse, Stephen C. Bower, Jim B. Brown, Michael Deppe, John Dull, Margaret Galvin, Geoffrey G. Giorgi, Edw. Grimmer, Lynn Hammond, Calvin Hawkins, Lenore Heaphey, Kristen Hill, Andrea Knish, Andrew Kraemer, James Krajewski, Gerald Kray, Paul Leonard Jr., Don Levinson, Kevin Marshall, Frank Martinez III, Thomas O'Donnell, J.J. Stankiewicz, Lemuel Stigler, Jill Swope, Deb Dzcaepanski, Cheryl B. Wells, Richard Wolter Jr., David Wilson, Rebecca Wyatt, and Harry Zembillas; John Potter and Ned Tonner, Jasper County; Ralph Howes, and Robert C. Szilagyi, LaPorte County; Laura Stafford and Robert Szilagyi, Porter County; Alan Hizer, Pulaski County; and Cassandra Hine, Starke County..

The First District Pro Bono Committee links clients from Lake, Porter, LaPorte, Jasper, Newton, Pulaski and Starke Counties who meet poverty income guidelines with volunteer attorneys who agree to represent them on urgent civil legal matters "pro

bono”, that is, “for the public good”, without charging a fee. Services provided include consumer and property issues such as bankruptcy, fair debt collection, predatory lending, simple wills, powers of attorney, and minor estate matters. Representation is also provided for domestic violence protective orders, dissolutions, child custody, parenting time and child support, tenant/landlord disputes, public benefits such as township poor relief and TANF, hardship driving licenses and other civil matters.

Many of the attorneys also have volunteered free services as either mediators or guardians ad litem for children caught up in domestic or child neglect issues.